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President:	Mr. Wittig/Mr. Berger	(Germany)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Vukašinović
	Brazil	Ms. De Oliveira
	China	Mr. Liu Bing
	Colombia	Mr. Quintana
	France	Mr. Gonnet
	Gabon	Mrs. Onanga
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	Lebanon	Mr. Assaf
	Nigeria	Mr. Ikuru
	Portugal	Mr. Madureira
	Russian Federation	Ms. Khvan
	South Africa	Mr. Murongwana
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Green
	United States of America	Ms. Edelstein

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250)

Letter dated 1 July 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2011/409)

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The meeting resumed at 3.10 p.m.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kohona (Sri Lanka): Let me join previous speakers in thanking Germany for convening this open debate under its presidency, and also acknowledge the presence of the Foreign Minister of Germany this morning. The useful work done by the Secretary-General's Office, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the UNICEF and other associated agencies will no doubt add substantial value to addressing this issue so vitally important to our times.

Sri Lanka endorses the three side events that were organized by the Permanent Mission of Germany in association with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Permanent Mission of Canada and the United Nations Programme on Youth in June. They incrementally advanced our understanding of these issues. The relevant discussions underlined the urgency of concerted action at the national and international levels to contain and halt the repugnant practice of child recruitment for armed combat. To deprive a child of his smiles and dreams and burden him with gore and machine guns is an appalling indictment of the values of the certain groups and individuals.

However, Sri Lanka has serious reservations about the report issued by Conflict Dynamics International under the auspices of the Permanent Missions of Canada and Germany. For instance, its assertion that individuals implicated in crimes against children in armed conflict continue to hold high Government positions is sadly incomplete and misleading. My Government consistently encouraged former armed groups to denounce violence and to enter the democratic process as a part of the reconciliation effort. Following this approach, the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulighal (TMVP), a breakaway faction of the terrorist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), ceased to be an armed group and entered the political process as a registered party.

Like in other countries where former terrorist groups have transformed themselves into legitimate political parties, the TMVP has also joined the democratic process. It has released all child combatants under a tripartite action plan with UNICEF and the Government. The adult cadres are very much part of the democratic process, which has had a salutary impact across the board. It appears that the report will stoke embers of a bitter past and politicize the issue of accountability related to child recruitment. Unfortunately, these complex underlying realities have been ignored.

This debate takes place against the backdrop of the increasing frequency and intensity of the identified six grave violations against children in armed conflict. Children are the most vulnerable group, and they therefore require conscious protection. We therefore welcome the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/250) on adopting targeted measures against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children. In Sri Lanka, it was clear that the child soldiers of the LTTE were cannon fodder for the movement who were sent to early graves.

On the recommendation of filing systematic information on violations against children in reports and recommendations to sanctions committees, we would like to urge the Council and the Working Group to ensure that the information so collected is objective, accurate, reliable and verified by experts, including forensic experts, and in an open and transparent manner with all the members represented in the country task forces where they exist. Paragraph 3 of resolution 1612 (2005), which clearly states that the monitoring and reporting mechanism must work in close consultation with the country concerned, must be strictly adhered to. We add this note recalling Sri Lanka's unpleasant experience with the global horizontal note filed from 1 May to 31 July 2009. Many reports had been made to the Council without reference to the country task force. Inaccurate reporting would cast doubt on the credibility of both reporting sources and the Secretary-General's report itself.

The progress made by Sri Lanka in realizing its policy of zero tolerance in the case of child recruitment, including the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child combatants under its "Bring Back the Child" campaign, is by any standard salutary.

According to a UNICEF report made public recently, over 60 per cent of the LTTE fighting forces from 1983 to 2002 consisted of boys and girls under 18 years, including orphans harvested after the tsunami. UNICEF recorded over 5,700 cases of child recruitment by the LTTE from 2003 to 2009. Others have suggested a figure closer to 20,000. Child soldiers were often deployed to attack villagers with machetes and used as suicide bombers, especially the girls. Hundreds of such attacks were launched. In the final stages of the conflict, children were thrown up in large numbers as cannon fodder. More than one generation of children were sacrificed to realize a megalomaniac's terrorist dream. These are our children.

Tremendous progress is being made in child tracing and family reunions. According to a recently released UNICEF study, 64 per cent of the missing Tamil children had been recruited by the LTTE. Many may have died in mosquito infested jungles.

In the post-conflict phase, significant attention is being paid to restoring and rebuilding schools and to the release of schools to the educational authorities. Over 135 schools in the north that were abandoned have now been rehabilitated and are functioning normally. Sri Lanka provides free education to all its children without distinction from kindergarten to university level.

Recognizing that children formerly associated with armed groups continue to be highly vulnerable, the monitoring of the reintegrated former combatants will continue. The Government recognizes that these children should be placed under the purview of the Department of Social Services. Children are an asset and the country will invest heavily in their future, as it had done in the past.

Unfortunately, despite the progress I have outlined, Sri Lanka continues to remain on the naming and shaming list in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report. The unresolved cases relating to five children appear to be the reason for this. In comparison with other situations in the world, this would appear to be trite and unreasonable. The individual allegedly responsible for the situation of the aforementioned children was indicted for criminal intimidation, an offence under the penal code. He pleaded guilty and was convicted and sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment, suspended for 10 years with a fine of 250,000 Sri Lanka rupees.

We call on the Council and the Working Group to undertake a holistic and fair assessment of the Sri Lankan case and to de-list Sri Lanka from the naming and shaming list. Sri Lanka now has a representative on the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and we intend to play a very active role there. It is pertinent to recall in this context a proposal made by a civil society representative, Ms. Carla Stea, at the meeting convened on June 30. She proposed that the Council consider adopting an honours list for countries that have registered appreciable progress in addressing issues of former child soldiers, especially those countries that are also parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The three-tier categorization maintained in the methodology of the annual United States *Trafficking in Persons Report* is also relevant and instructive in this context. A corresponding list, we believe, would be forward-looking and constructive. It would also encourage more countries with the problem of child recruitment to be willing partners to action plans.

We also agree with the views expressed by some representatives during the side event held on 30 June that the discourse on the issue of children and armed conflict should involve the wider United Nations membership if it is to be truly meaningful. Furthermore, the mandate only covers situations of a conflict. Limiting the discussion to the Security Council and allowing the non-Security Council members to speak on the issue only during open debates really does not accord the issue the seriousness, focus and attention it deserves among the wider membership. Broadening the space of this debate would bode well for ensuring collective responsibility and effective monitoring.

The President: May I remind speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Longer statements can, of course, be distributed in writing.

I give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. Rodríguez Arnillas (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I welcome the convening of this open debate on an issue that my country deems of great importance: children and armed conflict. I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2011/250) on this issue, as well as Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for the information she provided in her capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children

and Armed Conflict and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF.

The Security Council in recent years has adopted a series of resolutions that have provided the international community with a legislative framework for enabling progress to be made in the protection of children in situations of armed conflict and in the aftermath of conflict. The progress made in this respect has been the result of the growing concern about the issue as well as the political resolve of protagonists to take concrete action. The resolution adopted today by the Security Council represents a further step forward in the gradual process of protecting children in armed conflict.

However, the situation of children in armed conflict remains of concern. Hence, in the view of the delegation of Peru, it is imperative that we should redouble our efforts to put an end to the recruiting and use of children in armed conflict and take drastic measures to punish those who perpetrate sexual violence, maim or kill children in armed conflict. Impunity in such cases can in no way be tolerated by the international community.

In this report, the Secretary-General also referred with concern to the increasing number of attacks on schools and hospitals where children are among the principal civilian victims. My country therefore welcomes the important decision taken by the Security Council to allow the Secretary-General to include, annexed to his report, a list of those parties which in an armed conflict, in violation of international law, repeatedly attack schools and hospitals as well as those who repeatedly attack, or threaten to attack, those who are protected in connection with schools and hospitals. Peru therefore believes that the inclusion of this new criterion will contribute to providing greater and more comprehensive protection to children in times of armed conflict.

My delegation reiterates that it is important to continue to strengthen communication between the sanctions committees and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in order to make it possible to adopt measures or exchange information so as to provide greater protection to children or impose appropriate sanctions on those parties that commit serious violations against them. It is important for the sanctions committees to consider the possibility of including the situation of children in its mandates. In that respect, the progress made in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be viewed as a good precedent, as suggested by the Secretary-General in his report.

It is also important to continue to include in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as in peacebuilding missions, specific provisions with the clear and specific objective of protecting children.

My country believes that the Peacebuilding Commission has a fundamental role to play in supporting plans and programmes aimed at reintegrating children who are former combatants in the various spheres of economic and social life in the aftermath of a conflict. The support of the international community is therefore essential to support national endeavours to that end.

As my country has indicated on several occasions, crucial to addressing this problem and the issue of sexual violence against children in conflict is the possession of information that makes it possible to adopt preventive measures that allow for a rapid and effective response. It is necessary to continue to explore mechanisms that allow for a reliable exchange of information on acts of sexual violence, in order to take action to reduce and combat this scourge.

My delegation believes that this exchange of information must be substantively strengthened among United Nations agencies, the various Security Council committees and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Of equal importance is capacity-building and awareness-raising of military personnel deployed in the field so that they can adequately respond to situations involving sexual violence.

The establishment of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is evidence of the growing commitment of the Security Council to protecting children in armed conflict. In that respect, it is important that the appropriate administrative and substantive support be provided so that it can carry out its functions effectively, including field visits, which are of great importance.

I wish also to acknowledge and commend the devoted and unflagging work carried out by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the important work being

done by UNICEF, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other relevant institutions.

Finally, there is a broad international legislative framework providing appropriate protection to children in times of both peace and armed conflict. Hence it is necessary to continue to urge the parties to fulfil their obligations and to enhance the mechanisms that promote that process.

We cannot waver in our efforts, allow impunity in such cases, or yield to circumstances. It is an undeniable and imperative duty of the international community to guarantee peace, development and a climate conducive to the enjoyment of human rights for future generations. Peru is firmly committed to that lofty objective.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): Mr. President, I wish to express strong appreciation for your interest in this frank discussion on children and armed conflict. I wish also to convey my very strong support for the diligence of the Secretary-General in presenting the report (S/2011/250) on time, for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the work she has put in and for the Executive Director of UNICEF as well.

I need not go in detail about love for children and how it transcends social, cultural and all developmental factors. The United Nations Charter itself speaks of the noble objective of saving succeeding generations. The international community has conceived the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Pakistan was one of the six co-initiators of that summit in 1990 which provided the due fillip for the ratification of the Convention.

Pakistan also takes pride in being actively involved in promoting and protecting the rights of the child. We have a national commission for child welfare in development, in collaboration with UNICEF and the International Labour Organization, and we have worked for legislation on the progressive elimination of child labour, the rehabilitation of working children, formal and non-formal education, free vocational training and skill development. The United Nations agencies have been very helpful throughout this process.

We have also signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, and have worked on the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which is at a very advanced stage and within this year will see fruition. I do not think that anyone in this Chamber will ignore these noble intentions; but even hell has a path paved with good intentions, and we must have what I consider strictures where the mandate is concerned. The children and armed conflict mandate was created by the Council precisely to look into such situations, to ensure that the rights of children are protected in the worst environments of conflict. This is very important; indeed it is the crucial core of what needs to be achieved.

There are thousands and thousands of derivations of actions that this body takes. How many can we stretch into without losing the direction of the core? I think that all other situations should be aptly covered by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other relevant United Nations agencies. As a refresher, I would like to recall that in 2001 we adopted resolution 1379 (2001), of which paragraph 16 is the important feature. That paragraph speaks of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of the international obligations applicable to them, in situations that are on the Security Council's agenda or that may be brought to the attention of the Council by the Secretary-General, in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter, which in his opinion — and I want to underline this — may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

Then in 2009, in resolution 1882 (2009), we added, in paragraph 19 (a), the words "or in other situations of concern". The important phrase here is "in accordance with paragraph 3 of the present resolution". Paragraph 3 says that the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports should be "in accordance with the conditions set out in paragraph 16 of its resolution 1379 (2001)", which I just read. That remains the core, which cannot be in any way mitigated or set aside.

When there have been attempts to do so, the Office of Legal Affairs points out the difficulties. In a note to the Special Representative in 2009, the Office wrote that that this terminology has been used by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in the title of the annex, without a clear mandate of the Security Council nor, for that matter, its endorsement, and that that situation gives rise to legal, political and practical difficulties for the Secretary-General, the Special Representative and the Secretariat as a whole.

Today, the Council has decided to amend this further, and in paragraph 22 (a) the wording about situations of concern has been removed and replaced by "or in other situations". So we should start to lose any ambiguity and understand where we stand to do this good work. The work is exemplary, but it starts moving elsewhere. I endorse what my Indian colleague said earlier. We have four trigger mechanisms; let us keep them going. Let us not make things contentious. That is what the United Nations is all about: the letter of the law. Who better than the Security Council to know about that?

I would like to say that the reference to Pakistan, from my Government's point of view, is misleading and serves to accord undeserved respectability to terrorists and criminals — which would be greatly unfortunate. There are no provisions for situations other than armed conflict.

In conclusion, I have been asked by my Government to condemn in the strongest possible terms any use of children by extremists or any other groups to promote their nihilistic agenda, and to say that my Government is taking appropriate action to stop such practices. At the same time, we sincerely hope that the future reports of the Secretary-General will remain higher on objectivity but squarely correspond to the given mandate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Sinhaseni (Thailand): Let me begin by joining others in congratulating Germany on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July. On a more personal note, Mr. President, it is a pleasure to see you in the chair. My delegation also congratulates and thanks Germany for holding this open debate, which allows States that would not otherwise have the chance to present their views on this important issue to do so.

Thailand attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. We uphold the best interests of the child in our national policy and its implementation, particularly the right to education and universal access to it, which is guaranteed by the Constitution. We also share the concern of the international community over the issue of children and armed conflict.

We note the efforts and intentions of the Council, as evidenced in today's adoption of resolution 1998 (2011), to better protect children in situations of armed conflict. We support the effective implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions on this issue and would like to offer a few modest suggestions on ways to further improve work on this important issue.

First, according to resolution 1379 (2001) and subsequent resolutions, the scope of the children and armed conflict mandate continues to cover armed conflict situations that are on the Security Council's agenda or that may be brought to the attention of the Security Council by the Secretary-General, in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. It has come to our attention, and as my Pakistani colleague has mentioned, that the Office of Legal Affairs has stated, in the 2009 *United Nations Juridical Yearbook*, its opinion regarding the mandate on children and armed conflict:

> "You will recall that for a number of years this terminology has been used by the SRSG for children and armed conflict and included in the title of annex II without a clear mandate of the Security Council, nor, for that matter, its endorsement; a situation which gave rise to legal, political and practical difficulties for the Secretary-General, the SRSG and the Secretariat as a whole."

In moving forward and resolving such a serious systemic impediment, Thailand would like to suggest that the work of the Special Representative be guided by the definition of situations of armed conflict in accordance with international law. In addition, we hope that the Secretary-General will review and streamline future reports consistent with the authorized mandate. We are gravely concerned that any attempt to reinterpret the mandate without due regard to the original intention of the Security Council will undermine this important mandate and the work of the Council on this issue in the long-run.

Secondly, one can never emphasize enough the importance of coordination. There are various mechanisms within the United Nations system on issues related to children, including the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative on violence against children,

the Special Rapporteur on the right to education and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Rather than competing for work outside one's authorized mandate, coordination among those various mandate-holders is vital to the overall effective work of the Organization and to the rational use of its limited resources. In that regard, we are considering proposing an initiative to enhance coordination among the relevant United Nations actors on children. We hope that such an initiative will strengthen and increase the overall effectiveness of all existing United Nations tools on the protection of children.

Thirdly, it is imperative that information collected and communicated in the production of the reports on children and armed conflict be accurate, objective, reliable and verifiable by the United Nations system. That is the only kind of information that should be the basis for listing parties to armed conflict in the annex to the reports. In Thailand's case, the United Nations country team, including all United Nations agencies, has unrestricted access to all areas of the country and makes regular visits throughout the year.

Cooperation between the United Nations and concerned Governments is also indispensable. There should be no denying that the Government has primary responsibility and should play a central role in promoting and protecting children's rights, with the support of the United Nations. Opinion and information from the United Nations country teams on the ground, in close coordination with concerned Governments, should be given due recognition and form the basis for the annual report. Allegations unverified by the United Nations country team should be removed from the report so as not to affect its credibility.

Fourthly, we welcome the provision in resolution 1998 (2011), adopted today, requesting that Member States communicate relevant information to the Security Council on the implementation of its resolutions on children and armed conflict. Such engagement will further enhance coordination among the various stakeholders, align child-related priorities and ensure greater transparency and accountability in carrying out this mandate.

My fifth and final point is that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to addressing challenges relating to children and armed conflict. Each situation is fraught with political, socio-economic and cultural considerations that make it a unique challenge. We therefore urge the international community to invest more in areas that can make a real difference on the ground.

As was articulated in the statement, with which we fully associate ourselves, delivered by the representative of Switzerland this morning on behalf of the Human Security Network, a group to which Thailand belongs, we feel that demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation efforts are also crucial to long-term impact. In this regard, investment in areas such as education, basic health care, poverty eradication, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights is also paramount to addressing violence against children more comprehensively and effectively. At the end of the day, we must take a more integrated, holistic approach to the issue. Cooperation between United Nations agencies and the Governments concerned should be based on mutual respect and sincere dialogue in order to facilitate the effective implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary.

Mr. Körösi (Hungary): The Republic of Hungary fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union. Let me extend my gratitude to Ambassador Wittig for being a driving force as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. It is indeed a great pleasure for us to co-sponsor a resolution such as resolution 1998 (2011), adopted this morning.

In our view, the Security Council, in adopting today's landmark resolution, will strengthen the United Nations protection framework for children affected by armed conflict. My country pays special attention to preserving the cultural heritage of all nations, and to preserving their identity and building on these things both in peacetime and during conflict resolution. But we are also convinced that no country's culture and heritage can endorse attacks on schools and hospitals. We are convinced that the abduction of children from such targets is a crime against the children, their families and the communities concerned.

Hungary therefore welcomes the recommendation to expand the triggers for listing to parties who attack

schools and hospitals. Only through an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism can the perpetrators be held accountable. It is of key importance that perpetrators be held accountable for violations and abuses for which they are responsible. Hungary is of the firm opinion that grave violations against children should be incorporated as criteria meriting sanctions in the mandates of the Security Council's sanctions committees. We strongly believe that the international community should spare no effort in taking effective steps to respond and put an end to attacks, abuses, assaults and any other kind of violence aimed at children.

The Republic of Hungary strongly supports the work of the Security Council. We would like to reaffirm the importance of family, childhood, education and mental and physical health in all people's lives. Hungary would also like to further encourage the Council to maintain its campaign against the recruitment and abuse of child soldiers.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, Acting Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Serrano (European Union): Thank you, Sir, for giving the floor to the European Union and for convening this important debate. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Iceland; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Like other speakers, I thank Germany for its strong commitment to advancing the approach of the United Nations to the issue of children and armed conflict and the hard work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict under the leadership of Ambassador Wittig. I would also like to recognize Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's personal commitment to this issue and to extend a warm welcome to his Special Representative. The European Union (EU) commends Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy's tireless efforts on behalf of the rights and well-being of children facing armed conflict, and fully supports her mandate and actions. Let me also express our appreciation for UNICEF's contribution to child protection, which the EU supports.

The European Union greatly values the progress made in recent years in creating a strong normative framework for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. We therefore welcome resolution 1998 (2011), adopted this morning, and the expansion of the triggers for listing parties to attacks on schools or hospitals, as well as to attacks or threats of attack against protected persons connected to schools or hospitals, including schoolchildren, patients and education and medical personnel. We look forward to comprehensive implementation of the resolution, including through monitoring by country-level task forces.

The European Union also joins in calls to strengthen accountability and take further decisive action against persistent perpetrators, including through restrictive measures. When establishing or reviewing the mandate of relevant sanctions committees, the Security Council should include grave violations against children as criteria meriting sanctions. We also encourage the Security Council to address accountability gaps where there are no country-specific sanctions regimes, and to deal with violations of applicable international law committed against children in such cases.

The European Union also believes in the importance of investigating, prosecuting and punishing all those who commit grave violations against children. We have stated on numerous occasions that every effort must be made to end the culture of impunity, including through the International Criminal Court and other international criminal tribunals, which play a key role in ensuring accountability in cases where a State is unwilling or unable to fulfil its responsibilities. We would like to recall here that children are specially protected by the Rome Statute. We welcome the work of the International Criminal Court in this field, of which the ongoing trial of Thomas Lubanga for war crimes is the first example.

Many in this Chamber today have highlighted the crucial importance of decisive and comprehensive implementation of our commitments. I would like to use this occasion to update the Security Council on recent steps taken by the European Union to enhance its contribution to the work of protecting, rehabilitating and empowering children — objectives that have been

high on its foreign policy, development and humanitarian agenda for a number of years. I am happy to report that, since December 2010, the European Union has worked with a revised implementation strategy for the EU guidelines on children and armed conflict. European Union action in this area is firmly based on Security Council resolutions and the Paris Principles, and fully aligned with United Nations priorities. In that context, I would like to highlight that the EU guidelines pay particular attention to the situation and specific needs of girls in and after armed conflict.

The European Union has stepped up political advocacy and public diplomacy. For instance, we continue to support the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as also promoted by the Special Representative in cooperation with other partners.

On this year's International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers, the African Union and the European Union have jointly called for the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa and Europe and for the strengthening of efforts at all levels to prevent conflicts and protect children from the effects of war, including from being forced to serve as combatants, sex slaves or servants.

The European Union has made further improvements in mainstreaming. We now include new standard language on human rights, gender and child protection in all relevant mandates of European Union special representatives. We have started to develop training modules for our crisis management experts and enhanced human rights training for European Union diplomats, including for officials on postings in EU delegations around the world, who should soon act as children and armed conflict focal points.

Moreover, on the basis of its human rights guidelines and as a measure of practical support to the implementation of the country-specific conclusions and recommendations of the Security Council Working Group, the European Union has funded numerous projects to support protection and rehabilitation for children in post-conflict situations.

The European Union has enhanced its practical cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative and with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in view of its crucial role in mainstreaming protection issues within peacekeeping missions. We look forward to further intensifying our collaboration with the United Nations to the benefit of children affected by armed conflict, including with United Nations country teams in the field.

In conclusion, my thanks go out to all who work on this noble cause on a daily basis, often in difficult situations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Goledzinowski (Australia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important debate. We always say that, of course, but I think that this issue does have special resonance.

Before I deliver my statement, I would like to say that, as a member of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, we are very pleased to associate ourselves with the statement delivered this morning by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group.

Australia welcomes the Security Council's demonstrated commitment to addressing grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict. That commitment has yielded notable and tangible results. In that regard, we congratulate Afghanistan for signing the comprehensive action plan to halt child recruitment and other violations by the Afghan National Security Forces, only 12 months after the Afghan National Police was listed by the Secretary-General on recruitment grounds. We also commend progress in the Philippines towards the development of an action plan with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines to ensure that children will not be recruited into the New People's Army or involved in the conflict there. We hope that the Government in Myanmar will allow Special Representative of the Secretary-General Commaraswamy to have access to non-State armed groups so that action plans can be negotiated, allowing some such groups in the country to be delisted.

Despite those successes, in his latest report (S/2011/250) the Secretary-General notes that attacks and threats of attacks against educational and medical facilities are a growing trend and are of significant concern. We also note that such attacks are in contravention of international law. Clearly, there is still work to be done. Attacks on schools affect not only children and youth but communities as a whole, undermining efforts to reduce poverty. We therefore

welcome the resolution adopted today (resolution 1998 (2011)), which expands the listing criteria to include the grave violations of attacks on schools and hospitals and credible threats or attacks against school children and educational and medical personnel. The inclusion of both schools and hospitals reflects the relationship between access to education and medical services and the survival, development and well-being of children.

We encourage the Working Group to fully utilize the toolkit available to it, including the use of emergency or irregular briefings, in line with the Group's terms of reference, to enable it to respond to surges in grave violations in a timely and flexible manner, particularly when they occur outside of the cycle of country reports and conclusions. The briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Working Group's formal meeting in May is a good example of how this could work in practice. Australia firmly believes that Working Group field trips, such as those recently undertaken in Nepal and Afghanistan, are powerful tools for securing commitments by listed parties. We hope that the Working Group will undertake further field visits in 2011.

Like others, we would like to welcome the work of Special Representative Coomaraswamy on the protection of children in situations of armed conflict, including through her field visits, which represent an important means by which the Council's recommendations are realized and acted upon at the ground level.

We look forward to increasing consideration by the Council sanctions committees of perpetrators of grave violations against children. We note that in 2010, for the first time, an individual in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was listed under the sanctions regime on such grounds.

We are concerned that some persistent perpetrators cannot be held accountable through targeted measures, given the absence of designated sanctions committees. We call on the Council to address this accountability gap on an urgent basis.

In conclusion, the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict have made significant advances in ensuring the protection of children in armed conflict. However, while we celebrate our collective successes, we must also recognize that challenges remain. We all share the responsibility of ensuring that those who abuse children in times of conflict do not go unpunished. We look to the strength and the commitment of the Security Council to lead us in that regard.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): I have the honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the Nordic countries, namely, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, which all sponsored resolution 1998 (2011), which the Council adopted this morning.

We are particularly pleased, Mr. President, with your effective approach to turning country situation reports into timely Security Council recommendations. This is crucial for the recommendations to have real impact. Good examples in that regard are the country conclusions regarding Afghanistan and Chad, which were approved in March and in April. As a positive follow-up, in the past few months both countries committed themselves to action programmes to end the use of child soldiers. All in all, this shows that the monitoring and reporting mechanism can be a powerful tool for ensuring that all rights of all children are respected. We should use it and related resolutions to provide the widest possible protection to children affected by armed conflicts.

In that regard, the increased attacks against hospital and schools and their personnel are of extreme concern to us. It is our view that both institutions should be equally respected as humanitarian space, including during conflict. This is a fundamental prerequisite for fulfilling the right of all girls and boys to education, as well as a basic requirement for promoting schools and hospitals as zones of peace and as vehicles for psycho-social support and recovery for children in unstable situations.

Finally, access to health care and education, especially for children, is a fundamental building block of lasting peace and sustainable development. Attacks on schools and hospitals, the denial of or restrictions on safe access to those facilities by armed groups, using them as shields, for military purposes or as recruitment grounds, and other disruptions to educational and medical facilities should trigger listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict.

Relevant sanctions committees are increasingly engaged in the agenda of children and armed conflict. We commend the efforts of the Special Representative in this regard. We urge the Council to continue to find ways to hold perpetrators to account through existing sanctions regimes and to explore new ways of ensuring accountability for violations committed in conflicts.

In order to acquire the necessary information on attacks and threats, the Security Council should ensure that all relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions and peacebuilding missions include specific provisions on monitoring and reporting violations by child protection advisers.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Thank you very much, Sir, for convening this meeting and for organizing the side event of 30 June as a very good preparation for this open debate.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict and would like to add a number of comments in our national capacity.

At the outset, we commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her dedicated staff for their excellent work on this topic.

We are alarmed by UNESCO's report entitled "Education under Attack", which reports recurrent attacks on students, teaching staff and institutions in situations of armed conflict around the world. The Secretary-General's report (S/2011/250) also documents increasing attacks on schools, which are highlighted in 14 out of the 22 country situations covered by the report and perpetrated by State and non-State actors. In almost all circumstances, attacks on schools violate international humanitarian law, and they may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity as defined in customary international law.

According to the Rome Statute, intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to education — provided they are not military objectives — is a war crime. We are therefore deeply concerned by reports of the widespread dual use of school buildings as both teaching facilities and military sites and urge all parties to conflicts to refrain from such use of these institutions.

Using school buildings for military purposes may also violate children's fundamental right to education, a right that is enshrined in key international human rights treaties and is non-derogable during times of armed conflict. We commend the Council for taking concrete action on this important issue through the adoption of resolution 1998 (2011) today.

Parties to conflict that attack schools and hospitals in contravention of applicable international law will now also trigger the monitoring and reporting mechanism. This is an important step in the right direction. We also believe, however, that equal weight must be given to all six grave violations of children's rights in various conflicts. Only with difficulty can differential treatment be squared with the universality and interdependence of human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law.

We are deeply worried about reports of increased recruitment and use of children in various armed conflicts. To respond to such incidents in due time, the Working Group should make better use of all its available tools, including emergency meetings and field visits. We welcome the initiative of your delegation, Sir, as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, to conduct more frequent field visits, and we are disappointed that other Council members have shown little enthusiasm for this approach. Field visits can send important signals to affected populations and to political and military leaders, and we hope that in the future the Working Group will make more effective use of this important tool.

Sixteen parties to conflicts have been listed in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General for more than five years for having committed serious violations of the rights of children in armed conflict. Those persistent violators must be subject to the Council's strong and urgent attention and action. Measures taken by the Working Group should be complemented by effective enforcement measures such as sanctions, including arms embargos, bans on military assistance and the imposition of travel restrictions.

We thus call on the Security Council to consider taking such measures when establishing or renewing the mandate of relevant sanctions committees, as

agreed in the Council's presidential statement of June 2010 (S/PRST/2010/10). Where no designated sanctions committee is in place, the Council should consider the use of a thematic sanctions committee. Furthermore, it should bear in mind the option of referring situations to relevant national and international justice mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, while considering the option of having the financing of such decisions borne by the United Nations budget.

Ultimately, the responsibility to respect the rights of children in armed conflict rests with the parties themselves. We call on all persistent violators to develop and implement an action plan that may eventually lead to their de-listing. To that end, the States concerned should allow direct contacts between the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and relevant non-State actors.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Sir, for having organized this important event, which underscores once again the importance that the Security Council and the entire international community give to the protection of children who are victims of armed conflict.

Belgium welcomes the excellent report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/250) that Ms. Coomaraswamy presented to us and the practical recommendations that it contains. I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her tireless commitment.

We welcome with enthusiasm the establishment of the fourth criterion for acknowledgement, namely recurrent attacks against schools or hospitals. This development is an important step in terms of strengthening the normative framework regarding children and armed conflicts. Moreover, I would like to congratulate the German presidency of the Council and you yourself, Sir, as well as the other members of the Council for its important decisions. As you know, Belgium was happy to co-sponsor this resolution.

I would like to illustrate the topic of this debate with the case of children in the Central African Republic, on the basis of my experience as Chairman of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. Regarding the situation throughout the Central African Republic, I would like to very briefly make five points.

First, with respect to the LRA — the Lord's Resistance Army — it still runs rampant in the south-east of the country, where it is to this day recruiting children as soldiers or sex slaves. Those who manage to escape it are in urgent need of psycho-social support. The communities who welcome them also need humanitarian support, instruction and medical care, and just as urgently. Above all, this problem requires a regional response.

Secondly, in the north-west of the country, more than 500 children have been demobilized from the ranks of the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et la démocratie, the APRD. Nonetheless, there is still no assistance provided for these children through a reintegration programme that would go beyond, and last longer than, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. That is my second point: the demobilization of child soldiers must go hand-in-hand with reintegration programmes.

Thirdly, in the north-east of the country, on 12 June the Government concluded a ceasefire agreement with the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix, the CPJP. Through that agreement, which should facilitate humanitarian access, one of the recommendations of the latest report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic (S/2011/241) is taking effect. And that is my third point: the reports of the Special Representative are having tangible effects.

Fourthly, given the enormity of the challenges in terms of protecting children, I noted, during my numerous visits to Bangui, that the United Nations system is lacking in resources and capabilities. While the Council prepares to include attacks against schools and hospitals as a criterion to be taken into account, it must be remembered that strengthening the system at the level of principle, an expansion of triggers, is not sufficient. We should also ensure that those who work to protect children have the necessary resources and capabilities to carry out their duties. Without that, the gap between the observed needs and the support provided will only widen in countries such as the Central African Republic, where attacks against schools and hospitals are undeniably still being perpetrated today.

Fifthly and finally, I wish to underscore the existence of two categories of child victims of armed conflicts who do not receive the attention they deserve: children born of rape, who are often treated as pariahs by society, and those who witnessed the rapes of their mothers, their sisters or other members of their family. To date this is a forgotten matter in the Central African Republic, in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere.

I know that Ms. Coomeraswamy is aware of the existence of these two categories, who have so far been forgotten or neglected, and is determined to give them all necessary attention.

I wish in particular to commend the decision of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Bangui to strengthen the work of the United Nations to protect children as soon as she arrived a few weeks ago. Her team has already made a very important initial step by relaunching the work of the technical-level inter-agency group on the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave child rights violations. The mechanism is finally up and running in Bangui.

In conclusion, I wish to welcome the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to set up a national council for the protection of children, and I encourage it to implement the recommendations in the first report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa (S/2009/66), especially in the area of children and armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your stewardship of the Security Council this month and your able guidance of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Allow me to begin on a personal note. I speak before this Council not only as the Permanent Representative of the State of Israel, but also as a father. I am deeply proud that I raised my three children — Lior, Tourer and Oren — in Jerusalem. However, my children grew up in a reality where abnormality had become the norm. From infancy, they saw that every educational institution had to be protected with an armed guard, from preschools to kindergartens to high schools. The international community cannot accept this abnormality as a normal way of life. No family, no child should live under those circumstances.

Children are the primary victims in armed conflict. They are its targets and, increasingly, its instruments. Thousands have been subjected to sexual exploitation, prostitution, rape and sexual violence. More than a quarter of a million minors are currently being exploited as child soldiers, recruited at such a young age that they are robbed of their schooling and their youth.

Israel assigns great importance to protecting children in armed conflict and is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Israel is proud to have co-sponsored today's resolution and commends Germany for initiating it.

We are encouraged by the progress that has been made on this issue, as is highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/250). Thousands of children conscripted into armed groups have been released in conflict zones around the world. To that effect, the United Nations has signed new action plans over the past year in the Philippines, Afghanistan and Chad. We welcome those developments and call for the agreements to be implemented without delay. However, releasing those children is not enough. The international community must make special efforts to reintegrate them into society so that they can hope for a future outside of combat.

I would like to extend Israel's appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her significant role in carrying out these efforts. We sometimes find that her reports could benefit from a wider range of resources. However, we salute Special Representative Coomaraswamy's professionalism and dedication to protecting children in conflict around the world.

My statement would not be complete without reiterating the pressing need to protect children in the face of terrorism and extremism. While this is a global concern, the situation in our region provides a clear picture of this multifaceted challenge.

In the Middle East, terrorists continue to single out children in their attacks. My country was numb with horror last March when Palestinian terrorists brutally murdered five members of an Israeli family in

Itamar as they slept in their home. The terrorists went from room to room, using knives to carry out their appalling crime. They killed both parents; they killed their two children, ages 4 and 11; and, in an act of unspeakable cruelty, they murdered the youngest member of the family, a three-month old baby girl.

That is just one of many attacks that terrorists have launched against Israeli children. Last April, Hamas deliberately targeted a yellow school bus in southern Israel. They struck the bus using an anti-tank missile, completely destroying it and killing a 16-year old boy. That attack underscores the daily reality facing children throughout much of southern Israel, where the threat of rocket fire is ever present. Since the beginning of the year, some 290 rockets and mortars have been fired into Israel — an average of nearly two attacks every single day. This alters the fabric of life. In the past six months, more than 100,000 Israeli children have been kept out of school on numerous occasions to avoid the danger of rockets.

There is no monopoly on the suffering caused by terrorism. All children in our region suffer. Hamas and other terrorist groups deploy minors as suicide bombers and recruit them to carry out attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers. They use children as human shields; they place children in harm's way by using schools, hospitals and civilian neighbourhoods as a base for their activity.

The Council has a responsibility to address the broader context in which children are used and abused in armed conflict. In schools, camps and mosques and through the media, generation after generation of children across the Middle East have been taught to hate, vilify and dehumanize Israelis and Jews. This prevents them from becoming contributing members of a global, tolerant society. For the sake of those children and for the future of our region, the international community has a duty to end this culture of incitement. We need education that promotes peace instead of hate, tolerance instead of violence and mutual understanding instead of martyrdom.

The child victims of terrorism are real. Each one has a name and a family; each one has their own dreams and aspirations. The international community cannot accept the perpetuation or justification of terrorism in the Middle East or anywhere else. The next generation of children in our region will deserve a brighter future without conflict, without terror and without hate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): I take this opportunity to congratulate the German delegation on its assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of July, as well as to thank the delegation of Gabon for its leadership of the Council during the month of June.

We thank you, Mr. President, and your delegation for convening this important thematic debate and for your effective leadership on this issue. We also acknowledge the fact that the Council has remained seized of this important matter, especially through the continued oversight and consistent support of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We strongly believe that it is important that the Council remain seized of the matter.

Papua New Guinea, having ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, continues to support its implementation, more specifically as it relates to children in situations of armed conflict. We also continue to support the four core principles of the Convention, which are, first, non-discrimination; secondly, devotion to the best interests of the child; thirdly, the right to life, survival and development; and, lastly, respect for the views of the child.

While the organization Security Council Report's recent fourth *Cross-Cutting Report on Children and Armed Conflict*, dated 6 July, notes that much has been achieved, much more remains to be done.

In that respect, we observe and express our deep concern for the continued numerous violations perpetrated against children around the world. Furthermore, we would note the following six specific grave violations against children of which, we believe, the Council is aware and must continue to examine: the killing and maiming of children; sexual violence against children; the recruitment and use of children as child soldiers; attacks on schools and hospitals; the denial of humanitarian access to children; and abductions of children. My country therefore supports the Council's resolutions that seek to protect children, especially resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009).

The present debate is also about attacks on schools and hospitals. My delegation underlines the

importance of schools and the right of children to education. We therefore call for the creation of zones of peace for schools and urge the Council to support actions towards securing schools around the world.

In conclusion, my country reiterates its support to, and commends the work of, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. We also commend the relevant United Nations agencies, including UNICEF and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, for their commitment to addressing this area of critical concern to the international community. We pledge our support for their work.

Finally, if the children of the world are to become our future then surely we, the international community, have an obligation to ensure a better future for them.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Mahmood (Bangladesh): Let me begin by congratulating Germany on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July and for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. I also thank the Foreign Minister of Germany for presiding over this important meeting. And I welcome the presence and statements of Ministers here today as clear testimony to the issue's importance to all of us.

Allow me also to express my country's sincere thanks to the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Anthony Lake, for their detailed briefings this morning.

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his tenth report on the issue, as contained in document S/2011/250. We believe that his recommendations merit careful consideration and subsequent implementation and compliance by Member States and parties to armed conflict.

We commend the Security Council for its continued efforts to end violations against children in armed conflict. These include the Secretary-General's naming-and-shaming list, the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism, action plans, the creation of a Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict through resolution 1612 (2005), the application of sanctions and referrals to the International Criminal Court.

Those initiatives have yielded significant and tangible successes. As reflected in the Secretary-General's report, last year, too, several listed parties to armed conflict signed agreements to adopt action plans to end their recruitment or use of child soldiers. The United Nations system-wide response to this issue is also laudable. In that connection, I take this opportunity to thank UNICEF for its leadership role in the monitoring and reporting mechanism. The Special Representative and her team deserve our particular praise for their dedicated efforts.

While addressing this matter, we must focus a bit more on the supply side of the issue. The use of children by non-State armed groups does not take place in a vacuum. Conditions that might make children in those settings vulnerable to recruitment include poverty, discrimination, inequality, exclusion, hopelessness and desperate situations. They also include a culture of political violence, tensions over issues of religion and identity and a history of the use of child soldiers, all of which combine to create a situation where conflict is possible and where children can be used or abused by armed groups. Success in ending children's involvement in armed conflict therefore depends largely on addressing the root causes of motivation as well as desperation and on building societies where children's rights and dignity and the hope for a better future for all children are upheld.

Needless to say, there is still a long way to go. While progress has been made through action plans to release child soldiers in several situations of concern, the overall situation of children in armed conflict remains grave. There are 61 entities on the lists contained in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report, 16 of which have been listed for at least five years. Some kind of criteria should be contemplated to enforce full compliance by parties listed in the annexes, particularly persistent violators, with time-bound action plans. However, a cautious approach is necessary to ensure that such enforcement in no way risks harming the very vulnerable group that we are addressing here, namely, children.

The issue of child casualties in the course of military operations needs to be appropriately addressed. In line with paragraph 220 of the Secretary-General's report, we hope that all parties in situations

of armed conflict will adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

Apart from what I have referred to, in many armed conflicts grave violations are committed against children including, in particular the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence against children, the abduction of children, attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to armed conflict, in contravention of applicable international law. In that regard, I particularly urge the concerned parties to protect educational and health institutions and related personnel from such attacks. We also welcome the adoption today of resolution 1998 (2011) in this connection.

It has been more than nine years since the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict entered into force. Bangladesh signed and ratified the Optional Protocol on 9 September 2000. However, we note with sadness that a total of 50 Member States are still not party to it. We would like to urge those States to become parties to the Protocol. Children are the future of our world and they bear the torch of the culture of peace. It is our solemn duty to protect their physical safety and their right to live on planet Earth with their minds free of fear and filled with hopes and dreams.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's debate, which offers us all an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to ensuring the protection of the security, rights and well-being of children in armed conflicts. I also wish to extend my appreciation to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, for their remarks this morning.

The legacy of war and violence has had a devastating impact on my country. Violence still takes its toll on everyday life. It did so today in Kandahar. As President Karzai stated after the loss of his brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, the head of Kandahar Provincial Council, "This is the life of all Afghan people. I hope the miseries that every Afghan family faces will one day end."

Sadly, such miseries are ongoing and include children. Children continue to bear the brunt of conflict in Afghanistan. They are among the growing number of civilian casualties, and their ability to live safe, healthy and prosperous lives remains in jeopardy. There is no war zone in Afghanistan; there are no front lines. Violent attacks take place in our villages, markets and public streets, and put Afghan children at risk as they attempt to live normal lives. Forty-four per cent of all child casualties are caused by improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks, which are increasingly intended for soft targets such as civilian roads, schools and health clinics. Children, women and other vulnerable groups are the prime victims of such attacks.

The Government of Afghanistan is committed to fulfilling its responsibility to protect the rights of all children and to addressing violations of children's rights. We have initiated a number of important steps, including the launch of an inter-ministerial steering committee mandated to develop and implement our national action plan, which seeks to prevent the recruitment and use of children in our national security forces and to address all forms of violence against children. Our efforts are geared towards meeting our obligations in child protection.

We are working closely with the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to protect children's rights to security, education and health care. I take this opportunity to welcome the Working Group's visit to Afghanistan, led by Ambassador Wittig, during which important discussions were held with relevant Government entities to enhance progress in the lives of Afghan children.

We all must address the disturbing rise in child suicide bombers employed by extremist militant groups. Recent reports of terrorist networks training and selling children to militant groups for suicide bombings reflect gross violations of children's rights in all countries. The vulnerability of a child who knows nothing outside of a war-torn existence is not up for exploitation in war; a child's innocence is not fair game as a fighting strategy; and most importantly, a child's body is not a weapon of war either under the standards of the Constitution of Afghanistan or under international law. The use of these children in suicide

attacks is a heinous crime that must be addressed with firm conviction.

By the same token, we believe it essential to avoid equating the Afghan Government with the terrorists when considering the challenges facing Afghan children. Attacks against children and violations of their fundamental rights are the work of those who are continuing their campaign against peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Violence against children through sexual, physical and domestic abuse is an abomination and against national law. Sexual violence, including pederasty in its local form, which is widely sensationalized in media reports, is a crime that incurs serious punishments under the Afghan legal system. Though such problems are not unique to Afghanistan, we are taking all necessary steps to stop this illegal, un-Islamic and immoral practice.

The widespread poverty afflicting the country is also a threat to the safety and security of Afghanistan's children. Over 7 million children are living under the poverty line. Poverty plunges underage children into the labour force both in Afghanistan's cities and in the countryside. Their struggle to be breadwinners deprives many children of opportunities to pursue an education and to build a brighter future.

In the face of these challenges, we should not lose sight of the progress made thus far. To date, more than 7 million boys and girls are enrolled in schools, investing in their futures. We have constructed more than 4,000 schools across the country; we predict having nine million children enrolled in schools by 2020; and in a country where practically no girls received education just 10 years ago, over 40 per cent of these new students will be girls. Additionally, the great majority of Afghanistan's population has access to basic health care, showing great improvement over the past 10 years.

Nevertheless, we have yet to overcome our challenges. We look forward to our continued partnership with the international community to improve security and ensure prosperity in the lives and futures of Afghan children. Our international partnerships will remain intact throughout the transition as the Afghan Government begins to assume its leadership role. Therefore, we are alone neither in our successes, nor in our failures. We share responsibility for the security of children in Afghanistan, who need and deserve an environment free of indiscriminate violence to pursue their full potential.

The President: In my national capacity, I offer Germany's condolences for the death of the brother of President Karzai.

I give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Han Thu (Myanmar): At the outset, my delegation wishes to express our gratitude to you, Sir, for presiding over this important meeting. We also join previous speakers in thanking Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their updated information on the situation of the protection of children in armed conflicts. It is most timely that the Council is considering this important issue following the release of the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250).

Children are the most innocent and vulnerable victims of armed conflicts. Most often in conflicts, they are abused and deprived of their basic human rights. Children are still being recruited as combatants, maimed, killed and raped in various armed conflicts. Crime against children is unforgivable. Despite the measures prescribed in international humanitarian law and Security Council mandates, children continue to suffer in conflict situations around the world.

Ensuring national reconciliation, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and the promotion of sustainable development and poverty eradication are the best approaches to preventing conflict and to enhancing the protection of children on a long-term basis. The international community and the United Nations have a vital role to play in assisting States to establish an environment in which children can best enjoy their basic rights and be better protected.

We believe that the primary responsibility for protecting children and promoting their welfare lies with States. The Government of Myanmar has made a commitment that no children under the age of 18 will be recruited into military service. Our armed forces are purely voluntary, and those entering military service do so of their own free will. There is neither a draft system nor forced conscription in our country. Moreover, under the Myanmar Defence Services Act of April 1974 and War Office regulation 13/73, a person

cannot be enlisted in the armed forces until he or she has reached the age of 18. This regulation is strictly enforced. The Government has also initiated an active advocacy programme to prevent the recruitment of under-age children into military service. We have strict scrutiny and inspection procedures in place at the recruitment stage. New recruits who do not meet the minimum age requirement or other qualifications are rejected or discharged from the armed forces.

The Judge Advocate-General's Office of the Ministry of Defence oversees strict adherence to military recruitment orders, directives and regulations. In that context, from January to April of this year a total of 36 persons who failed to meet the recruitment requirements were discharged from the military. Along with discharging and reuniting under-age children with their families, punitive actions were also taken against one officer and 11 soldiers of other ranks for their failure to abide by existing recruitment rules and regulations.

We have made it crystal clear that the Myanmar Government is eager for the name of our army, Tatmadaw Kyi, to be de-listed from the annex of the Secretary-General's report. To reach that goal, we are preparing a draft national plan of action that includes the elements provided by UNICEF and samples of the plans of action of three different countries, which we received from the Special Representative's Office. The technical working group comprised of officials from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Attorney-General's office and the Chief Justice's office met with representatives from UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) four times from September 2010 to March 2011.

With flexibility from both sides, we hope to finalize our national plan of action. On our part, Myanmar will continue to cooperate fully with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and UNDP to conclude a national plan of action in the near future. Our aspiration is for the name of our national army to be de-listed from the annex to the Secretary-General's report.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Ebner (Austria): At the outset, I would like to thank the German presidency for convening this debate and for its excellent work in the Security Council in strengthening the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. I also wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Radhika Coomaraswamy and her Office for their tireless efforts and important work. We appreciate the close cooperation between Ms. Coomaraswamy and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström.

Austria aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union, the representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Human Security Network and the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict.

Austria welcomes the adoption today of resolution 1998 (2011), which will strengthen the existing child protection framework by expanding the triggers of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. The increase in attacks on schools and hospitals, including the specific targeting of girls, are deeply worrying and need to be clearly condemned. The further expansion of the triggers requires an increased monitoring and reporting capacity by the United Nations. Close cooperation among all child protection actors becomes even more important. We welcome the Council's resolve, as reaffirmed in today's resolution, to take action against those parties to conflict that persist in committing violations and abuses against children, including by the adoption of targeted measures.

Resolution 1998 (2011) provides a clear road map to ensure respect for Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict. In that regard, we welcome the Council's intention to ensure that provisions pertaining to violations of applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children are included as listing criteria for its sanctions regimes. The Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, provides a good model in that regard. We highly appreciate the exchange of information between the Committee and the Special Representative, which entailed concrete action.

We would like to encourage the Council to consider using all tools at its disposal, including the

imposition of targeted measures, to take action against persistent perpetrators in country situations where no sanctions committee is in place. We agree with the Secretary-General that direct contact between United Nations country teams and non-State actors is important in order to prepare and implement action plans, and thereby ensure the effective protection of children.

Finally, we encourage the Council to continue to include child protection provisions in the mandates of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. We would like to highlight the importance of training for both military and civilian peacekeeping personnel. In that context, Austria warmly welcomes the Department of Peacekeeping Operations training initiative to promote child protection through comprehensive training, including by reviewing existing training materials.

Let me conclude by expressing my appreciation for the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict under the German chairmanship. Austria is pleased to hear about the Secretary-General's efforts to establish a working arrangement for the Secretariat, and encourages continued support for the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Pavlichenko (Ukraine): While Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, I would like to commend Germany for its strong commitment to advancing the children and armed conflict agenda, as well as the intensive work done by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict under the leadership of Ambassador Wittig. I would also like to recognize the personal commitment to this issue on the part of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Representative Radhika Coomaraswamy.

We welcome the Secretary-General's most recent report on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250), as it contains many valuable recommendations, including those on measures that could be undertaken against persistent violators. Important progress has been made over the past year. We welcome the expansion of the triggers for listing to include the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence. We also welcome the exchange of information among the sanctions committees. We would like to encourage more such interaction between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the sanctions committees, their expert groups and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Noting with concern the increased number of attacks on educational facilities, we encourage the Security Council to address this problem in its future deliberations. We consider it important to thoroughly investigate, prosecute and punish all those who commit grave violations against children. Ukraine also encourages the Security Council to include in sanctions committee mandates, where appropriate, provisions pertaining to violations of applicable international law committed against children and of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict.

We in Ukraine have made child welfare a strategic national priority. Ukraine has undertaken appropriate measures to protect the rights and dignity of every child. We remain fully committed to the proper implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Earlier this year, the Committee on the Rights of the Child considered Ukraine's initial report under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Committee welcomed, among other things, Ukraine's endorsement of the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups, and of the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups. The Committee also welcomed Ukraine's mandatory training regarding children in armed conflict, including on the Convention and the Optional Protocol, which is organized for Ukrainian military personnel who participate in international peacekeeping operations.

We firmly support the Special Representative's campaign for universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and stress the great importance of such legally binding international instruments for protecting all children worldwide, with no exceptions.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm Ukraine's commitment — particularly as an active participant in peacekeeping operations and a member of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Executive Board of UN-Women — to applying all its efforts to help assure children of healthy, appropriate

conditions in every situation of their lives. We believe that resolution 1998 (2011), adopted today, can contribute to children's well-being. As one of the resolution's sponsors, Ukraine looks forward to its full and successful implementation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile congratulates the German presidency on its decision to make this important issue the subject of an open debate in July. My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and interesting report (S/2011/250). We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for the valuable information she shared with us today, and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, for his comprehensive briefing.

Chile associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Human Security Network, of which Chile is a member.

The protection of children in general, and of those living in areas of armed conflict in particular, is a matter of special concern for my country, which is why Chile is a sponsor of resolution 1998 (2011), adopted by the Council today, and hopes to see it fully implemented.

There is no doubt that the issue of the protection of children in armed conflict has made progress since the Security Council first included it on its agenda. The Secretary-General's decisive action in appointing a Special Representative for this area, and the efforts of that Special Representative, have contributed effectively to this progress. Moreover, the increased interaction between the latter and the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict should be emphasized, since they deal with two sides of the same coin. I also stress the growth of coordination with other United Nations agencies devoted to the protection of children once they have returned to society and have been reintegrated into the educational system. Special attention should be paid to the scars that the experience of violence has left them with, and of course even more attention and care are needed if they have been subject to sexual violence.

We share the concern, expressed in the Economic and Social Council ministerial declaration adopted yesterday in Geneva on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education that "a large number of the world's out-of-school children live in States affected by armed conflict and natural disasters" (*E/2011/L.28*, para. 30*). This is a clear warning that we must work to improve access to education in a safe environment for children living in armed-conflict or post-conflict situations. Assistance in helping these children to recover must be provided through the appropriate channels and reach the families and communities, who are generally those most directly involved in the recovery process.

Chile calls on those Governments suffering through armed conflict to make every possible effort, while taking necessary precautions, to establish channels of communication with the other actors in the conflict so as to keep children at a distance from the hardships of conflict and prevent their direct involvement in it. At the same time, justice must be done when children are involved and abused. This goes hand in hand with reparation, which could be provided in special facilities for education, health and so forth, including symbolic reparation as well.

My country shares the Secretary-General's concern about the increase in attacks on hospitals and schools. In that regard, Chile calls on the parties to conflict to refrain from using any people — much less children — as human shields. Whatever the situation, attacking schools and hospitals is to be especially condemned.

Lastly, Chile joins in calling on those States that have not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict to do so.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Saadi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express my country's thanks and appreciation to you, Mr. President, for having organized this open debate on children and armed conflict, a subject that is undoubtedly of major significance to my country and other Members of the United Nations. We express our appreciation to the Foreign Minister of the friendly State of Germany for presiding over the debate, and thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, as well as the

Executive Director of UNICEF, for their efforts and briefings.

The economic and political circumstances of Yemen, currently and for the past few years, are well known. My country believes, however, that children are the future on whom we are relying to build a modern State. The Republic of Yemen was therefore among the first countries to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in May 1991, as well as its two Optional Protocols. We provide periodic reports on the implementation of those instruments. We have taken steps to enact legislation to promote and protect the rights of children — for example, law 45 of 2002, on the rights of the child, and law 24 of 1992, on the care of minors.

The Republic of Yemen has not only signed international instruments and enacted domestic legislation to protect the rights of children, we have also set up institutional mechanisms to translate them into concrete actions. We have also established a Ministry of Human Rights and a Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, as well as several national committees and networks on the protection and promotion of the rights of children. In particular, we have put in place the High National Committee, which is chaired by the Vice-President, similar other national technical committees to protect human rights under the auspices of the Ministry of Human Rights, as well as a technical committee to fight child trafficking. We have also forged a valuable partnership with UNICEF.

We have taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/250), with regard to which we wish to state the following.

First, we reaffirm our absolute commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of children in every respect.

Second, with regard to our commitment to prohibiting the conscription of children in armed conflict, all our national military legislation sets the minimum age for mandatory conscription into the armed forces at 18 years of age. Law 67 of 1991, concerning military and security forces, law 23 of 1990, on public reserves, and law 22 of 1990 are all in line with the Optional Protocol.

Third, we have cooperated with all international and civil society organizations to prohibit the conscription and involvement of children in armed conflict. We have also established numerous guidelines and published many manuals with regard to this issue.

Fourth, the Government has been compelled to shoulder its responsibility to combat the recent armed rebellion in Sa'ada province. The State of Yemen declared a ceasefire in February 2010, to which it has been committed ever since.

Fifth, an amnesty has been declared in order to pardon all detainees, including children who were conscripted by the rebels and Al-Houthi groups.

Sixth, the Government has undertaken many measures to provide assistance to all internally displaced persons and refugees, especially children.

Seventh, we would like to stress that, in spite of our country's special circumstances, great progress has been made since the listing of Yemen in last year's report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181). We therefore do not see any reason to include additional categories in the report's list.

Eighth, we would like to highlight the importance of the need to gather precise information with regard to the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

We would like to state that, in spite our country's special circumstances, we will make every effort to implement our international obligations and promote the rights of children. We hope that the international community will support us in our endeavours.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important open debate on children and armed conflict and for the submission of the concept paper (S/2011/409) on this topic.

Azerbaijan aligns itself with the statement delivered today on behalf of the European Union. I would like to make a few additional remarks in our national capacity.

We reiterate our commitment to continuing to support the activities of existing United Nations mechanisms and other relevant international actors aimed at ensuring more effective protection for the rights of children and improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict. Azerbaijan's

determination with regard to the issue under consideration is obvious and stems from our keen interest to contribute to the achievement of sustainable peace and development and from our practical experience in addressing the impact of armed conflict on civilians, including children.

The war unleashed against our country and the military occupation of our territories have had a considerable impact, inter alia on the humanitarian aspect of the problem, and primarily affect the most vulnerable groups. Azerbaijan continues to suffer from having one of the highest number of refugees and displaced persons in the world, large numbers of whom are children. The most serious crimes of international concern have been committed during the conflict, and even children have not been spared.

In its relevant resolutions adopted in 1993 in response to the occupation of Azerbaijani territories, the Security Council referred specifically to violations of international humanitarian law, including the forced displacement of large numbers of civilians in Azerbaijan. The European Court of Human Rights later arrived at an important conclusion, qualifying the behaviour of those carrying out the incursion into the territory of Azerbaijan as acts of particular gravity that could amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity.

In spite a formal ceasefire, deliberate attacks by the occupier against Azerbaijani civilians and civilian objects, in contravention of applicable international law, have become more frequent and violent over recent years, resulting in the killing and maiming of many inhabitants residing near the front lines, including children.

The issue of children and armed conflict has been inscribed firmly on the international agenda, and a strong normative framework has been developed. Important steps have been taken to achieve accountability for grave child rights violations. However, serious challenges remain. More resolute and targeted measures are required to protect children in situations of armed conflict and to end impunity for genocide, crimes against humanity and other egregious crimes perpetrated against children. Furthermore, particular consideration should be given to internally displaced children in the context of ensuring their inalienable right of return, and to the implications for the protection of child rights of illegal policies and practices in situations of foreign occupation.

Another challenging issue requiring urgent action is that of children taken hostage and reported missing in connection with armed conflict.

Azerbaijan will continue to contribute to identifying long-term and sustained solutions to this problem and to focusing on the ways and means by which the international community can address existing challenges, including in particular violations and abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict and measures aimed at bringing to justice those responsible for such violations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Mr. Kamau (Kenya): Allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for presiding over this important meeting. Kenya appreciates the global importance and priority that the Security Council and the international community continue to attach to the protection of children affected by or involved in armed conflict.

My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2011/250) — which enumerates the grave violations committed against children in armed conflicts, the progress made in the release of children from armed groups and the challenges faced in dealing with some of the parties to conflicts — as well as for the recommendations it contains. We also very much appreciate the statement delivered by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and by the Executive Director of UNICEF.

Child protection should be part and parcel of any conflict management and prevention strategy. In that regard, we appreciate the progress made through the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Kenya welcomes the attention that is being drawn today to the issue of children and armed conflict, especially as it relates to attacks on schools and hospitals. But it is Kenya's observation that, while deplorable, attacks on schools and hospitals are symptomatic of a deeper and more troublesome situation of civil strife, abuse of human rights and failure in governance, law and order. It is imperative that the Security Council and the international

community at large address those fundamental causes as well.

While Kenya recognizes the progress made over the years, significant challenges remain. We recognize the situation in countries listed in the Secretary General's report. For Kenya, the situation in Somalia presents a clear, persistent and continuing threat to national security and to our economy.

As highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report, engaging armed terrorist groups, for example Al-Shabaab, for purposes of curbing the involvement of children in armed conflict remains a formidable challenge. The consequences of the involvement of children in armed conflict are devastating, not only in Somalia but also beyond that country.

In Kenya, the burden of more than 20 years of conflict in Somalia and the continued flow of refugees is enormous and harmful to our society and economy. Kenya is host to the Dadaab refugee camp, which is the world's largest such camp. With more than half a million refugees, the camp is stretched beyond its capacity. As we speak, more than 1,000 new refugees, consisting mainly of women and children, including ex-soldiers and children who have been in armed conflict, cross into Kenya every day. That is more 30,000 new refugees every month.

Following terrorist acts committed by Al-Shabaab, the World Food Programme was forced out of Somalia. This is a cause for grave concern, as we know that the availability of food is a powerful deterrent in the recruitment of child soldiers.

We therefore urge the Security Council to redouble its efforts to help the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and neighbouring countries, including ours, to put down these terrorist groups. We must not attempt to placate or engage in dialogue with terrorists. Only this will help to normalize the situation in a country such as Somalia, bring an end to the recruitment of children and facilitate the resumption of emergency assistance to the Somali population.

Kenya recognizes the decades of civil war that the new Republic of South Sudan has suffered, with many children involved either as child soldiers or as victims of the conflict. Kenya carried a heavy burden with regard to those children during the years of the civil war. There is an urgent need for heightened support in dealing with post-conflict trauma for affected children and families, including in South Sudan. As we join others in congratulating the Republic of South Sudan on attaining its independence and becoming the newest State, we encourage States and other international actors to support the new Government in promoting the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of children and families affected by the armed conflict. The measures adopted should not only realize their medium-term development but also their long-term aspirations.

In conclusion, as a troop-contributing country, Kenya welcomes the Secretary-General's call for a specific provision for children's protection to continue to be included in the mandate of all peacekeeping operations, as well as for the inclusion of child protection in pre-deployment training. That will no doubt enhance the broad and effective protection of children in armed conflict, including protecting those in schools and hospitals.

Having said that, we should never loose sight of the fact that the most effective way to protect children is to prevent the outbreak of armed conflicts and to prevent conflicts from escalating by addressing the multiplicity of causes of conflicts, including climate change, hunger, disease, exploitation and under-development.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this very important debate. I also wish to congratulate the delegation of Germany on its excellent conduct of the presidency of the Security Council during this month of July.

Kyrgyzstan welcomes the tenth annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/65/250). We also thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their comprehensive presentations.

Let me reaffirm Kyrgyzstan's strong commitment, as a member and Vice-President of the Human Rights Council, to the promotion of human rights and the safeguarding of international humanitarian law.

Kyrgyzstan appreciates the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. We believe that the strict implementation of those recommendations will greatly change the lives of many children for the better. We consider it necessary to adopt more stringent measures to bring to justice and end impunity for criminal gangs and individuals who have continuously committed serious violations against children and have been listed in the report of the Secretary-General for the past five years.

Kyrgyzstan welcomes the signing of the new plans of action mentioned in the report. We join the call of the Secretary-General to the parties involved in the recruitment, use, killing and maiming of children, as well as in committing sexual violence against them, to finalize plans of actions as soon as possible, in close cooperation with the relevant United Nations country task forces.

The timely implementation of action plans and the taking of appropriate measures in respect to those parties not complying with those documents are crucial to preventing criminal acts against children. We believe that the Security Council should develop concrete measures to track progress in the implementation of such plans.

Kyrgyzstan fully shares the concern of the Secretary-General and the Security Council with regard to the growing trend in attacks against schools and hospitals. We strongly condemn those acts and urge all parties to respect international humanitarian law.

Kyrgyzstan believes that the issue of child protection should be consistently reflected in peace processes and peace agreements. The special needs of children must be taken into account in post-conflict planning and in the funding of peacebuilding activities.

Protecting children in armed conflict should always be part of a wider conflict prevention strategy and of response measures aimed at overcoming hunger and poverty and promoting socio-economic development. In this regard, we would like to emphasize the pivotal role of the United Nations in ensuring the successful implementation of such a strategy. It is important to maintain a close and effective cooperation between the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as peacekeeping missions, political missions, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and other agencies.

Since 1994, Kyrgyzstan has been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as other international legal instruments aimed at protecting civilians in armed conflict. I would like to confirm that Kyrgyzstan will continue to strictly follow the commitments assumed under these international instruments.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Kyrgyzstan supports resolution 1998 (2011), adopted today by the Security Council, and believes that it will make an effective contribution to the protection of children in armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Shin Dong Ik (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like express my appreciation to you, Sir, for organizing this meaningful open debate on children and armed conflict. I would also like to commend the work of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to end violations against children and to protect their rights. My delegation would also like to applaud Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Representative Radhika Coomaraswamy for working tirelessly to lessen the plight of children in armed conflict around the world. In this regard, we welcome the most recent comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250).

Taking this opportunity, my delegation would like to note the positive developments on this issue since the historic adoption of resolution 1882 (2009) and the expansion of the triggers. Specific achievements have been realized in the key areas of recruitment, and an expansion of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes has been seen. The Republic of Korea also welcomes the efforts of the Working Group thus far in 2011, including its adoption of four sets of conclusions on Afghanistan, Chad, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this connection, we urge the relevant Governments to establish action plans to ban the recruitment of child soldiers.

We are particularly pleased to note the increase in country-specific reports of the Secretary-General in 2010 that contain information on the protection of children, as recommended in resolution 1460 (2003). This is a helpful step in the right direction but should be scaled up even further, if possible, to include more

references to the protection of children in country-specific reports with a view towards full compliance with resolution 1460 (2003).

However, despite the aforementioned progress, my delegation remains concerned by the perpetual plight of children affected by armed conflict around the world. There is still widespread impunity for grave crimes perpetrated against children in many countries. While we note some of the steps in the right direction — including investigations, arrests, trials and prosecutions that Governments have committed to address — the issue of impunity continues to prevail in too many conflict areas.

Indeed, the Council must stand resolute and apply robust, targeted measures to confront these persistent perpetrators. In this connection, my delegation continues to support the Secretary-General's recommendations that the Council consider including child recruitment and use in the mandate of all of its sanctions committees, including those that deal with counter-terrorism. Incorporating more expertise in the field of child protection on the Council's sanction committee expert groups, as well as scaling up reporting on violations against children, would be steps in the right direction.

Many persistent violators, in addition to child recruitment, have been responsible for committing other grave violations against children, such as rape and sexual violence. In this connection, we continue to support the annex listing of parties accused of rape and sexual violence against children in the report of the Secretary-General, pursuant to resolution 1882 (2009), as well as the adoption of resolution 1960 (2010), which specifically established a mechanism for monitoring and reporting sexual violence in conflict areas on the Council's agenda. My delegation encourages close consultations between the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in this regard.

My delegation believes that the adoption of resolution 1998 (2011) today is yet another milestone in the Council's work on the issue of children and armed conflict, and we are confident that it will go a long way towards further protecting children around the world and send a strong message that such crimes will not be tolerated.

We hope that today's open discussion will continue to increase the Council's consequential deliberation on this critical issue. The Republic of Korea will continue to stand with the international community on this issue to ensure the protection of children around the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Nazarian (Armenia): I join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate and welcoming the presence of Minister Westenvelle and other honourable foreign ministers earlier today, as well as the Executive Director of UNICEF.

We also thank Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250), which focuses on the growing trend of attacks against schools and hospitals, and his recommendation that the Council expand the gateway to the annexes to include parties that attack or threaten to attack schools and hospitals. We welcome the recommendations and the positive developments referred to in the report. The report is a useful guide for coping with the continuing challenges in the implementation of resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009) and other relevant documents of the Council.

Conflicts have devastating consequences on children, whose protection is of the utmost importance, deserves the attention of the international community, and should be a primary responsibility of all because it is a serious humanitarian concern and a significant security issue. The protection of children therefore requires a multidimensional and comprehensive approach.

For Armenia, a country hosting tens of thousands refugee children as a result of war and aggression imposed on us, this debate is of particular importance. Innocent Armenian civilians, in particular children, have been subjected to a barrage of heavy artillery, missile shelling and bombing. We have witnessed indiscriminate firing upon homes, schools, kindergartens, hospitals and even ambulances.

Armenia therefore believes that concerted actions are necessary at the national, regional and international levels to put an end to such brutal actions and policies. At the same time, our efforts should complement each other, with all stakeholders utilizing the comparative

advantages of their respective mandates and experiences.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my Government's gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her tireless efforts to ensure that children can live and grow in peace and dignity. Ms. Coomaraswamy's role has been growing in recent years, with her field missions now serving multiple purposes, including the dissemination of the recommendations of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. For its part, the Working Group has showed renewed improvement in its working methods and continues to play an active role in mainstreaming the issue in the Council this year.

It is unfortunate that, despite the legal safeguards in place, horrendous violations of children's rights, such as the use of child soldiers and the killing, maiming and rape of children still continue in many parts of the world. Obviously, it would be naive to expect that problems of such gravity could be resolved by the mere provisions of relevant legal norms. After a high-level debate on peacekeeping, peacebuilding and conflict prevention in September 2010 (see S/PV.6389), the Council reaffirmed in its presidential statement the conviction that the

> "protection of civilians in armed conflict, particularly women and children, should be an important aspect of any comprehensive strategy to resolve conflicts" (*S/PRST/2010/18*).

We share the view expressed in this Chamber that the Council should also focus on the application of targeted measures against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children through the possible imposition of sanctions. My delegation therefore fully supports the adoption of today's resolution, which, inter alia, requests enhanced communication between the Working Group and the relevant Security Council sanctions Committees.

This debate represents an opportunity to become engaged in a serious discussion on how to address issues of cross-border violations against children, reaching out to persistent violators. We believe that the commitment from Governments in addressing the issue of violations against children can also provide the impetus needed to begin to seriously address this matter.

Child protection is everyone's responsibility, and the future of children is dependent on the actions we take today. The Government of Armenia is committed to doing its utmost and to constructively contributing to global efforts to promote this noble cause.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Benin.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My country, the Republic of Benin, is pleased to see the Federal Republic of Germany presiding over the Security Council. My delegation noted with great satisfaction the personal contribution of the Secretary-General and of the many representatives of the Governments of States members of the Council to the open debate today.

This debate clearly touches on an extremely sensitive subject in terms of the capacity of the United Nations to fully and effectively shoulder its responsibilities in the promotion of the ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular in the area of international peace and security and the protection of human rights.

I should like here to state that the Government of Benin is very pleased with the ongoing commitment and commendable dedication shown by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her team in terms of carrying out their responsibilities with respect to the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. I should like to commend in particular her bravery in visiting dangerous conflict areas to obtain the release of children recruited into and used in armed conflicts.

Benin would also like to encourage the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to work with resolve in cooperation with the United Nations agencies and international civil society actors that are working to protect children and young people in armed conflict.

Benin would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Qatar for its leadership in the context of United Nations efforts to ensure the protection of the right to education in emergency situations.

The adoption in 2010 by the General Assembly of resolution 64/290 represented a significant development in fighting international human rights violations affecting children. It offers hope for the effective achievement of the Millennium Development

Goals, in particular in the area of education. In that resolution, the General Assembly unequivocally condemned attacks deliberately targeting civilians in armed conflict, including schoolchildren, students and teachers, as well as attacks against civilian objects, in violation of international law. It also declared that such acts may constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and, for States parties, war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The same is true of attacks against schools and hospitals which should, during times of conflict, be considered as safe havens to ensure their inviolability.

The initiative taken by the Security Council to expand the mandate of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict to include attacks against schools and hospitals and protected persons working there demonstrates that the Council is addressing the concerns clearly expressed by the General Assembly in resolution 64/290 and by the Secretary-General in his latest report on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250). We congratulate the Council for having responded to the call by the Secretary-General that it make greater efforts to ensure that such facilities remain protected, in particular by appealing to all parties to the conflict to respect those essential institutions and their staff and to take all possible measures to protect them and ensure that they can function.

Guaranteeing humanitarian access remains a crucial question. Benin, as the main negotiator of resolution 1612 (2005) and having set up the monitoring and reporting mechanism, welcomes the expansion of its remit to encompass other atrocities affecting children. Benin urges the Security Council to make full use of the instruments available to it so as to ensure the respect of the rights of children caught up in armed conflict or in humanitarian crises.

It is important to step up international cooperation in order to guarantee access by children and young people to the basic services that are key to their well-being by establishing appropriate partnership and assistance programmes at the global, national and local levels. That is why Benin has been actively involved in preparing for the United Nations High-level Meeting on Youth, set to take place here in New York in several days to consider the situation of young people and children.

In conclusion, Benin is proud to be a sponsor of the new resolution on children and armed conflict. It supports the measures authorized by the resolution and, over and above that, all efforts undertaken at various levels to bring added pressure to bear on those who remorselessly trample on the rights of children caught up in armed conflict and in political or humanitarian crises.

Benin reiterates its urgent appeal to the international community to work with greater determination to put an end to all conflicts in the world, regardless of their intensity, to promote reconciliation and peacebuilding in the countries affected.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.